

Congressman Also Discusses How the Clean Energy Bill Will Create Jobs and Benefit New York

Kingston, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and state forest and environmental officials today announced the inclusion of a provision the congressman authored in the recently approved clean energy bill that would yield upwards of \$125 million in new federal funding over the life of the bill to help state and private forests in New York combat the impact of climate change.

After noticing the original draft of the House energy bill only included funding for federal forests to implement climate change adaptation activities, Hinchey worked with House Energy and Commerce Chairman Henry Waxman (D-CA) to adjust the bill so that programs dedicated to state and private forests would be eligible to receive federal funds from the bill. Nearly all of New York's forests are on non-federal land. Had Hinchey not worked to adjust the bill, New York and other states with significant state and private forests would have lost out on this much-needed funding, which totals \$3.1 billion over the life of the bill.

"Climate change does not distinguish between federal, state, and private lands so our national energy policy shouldn't make such a distinction either," Hinchey said. "Healthy forests are critical to our overall effort of reducing greenhouse gas levels and curbing global warming. New York is the fourteenth most forested state in the nation and thanks to this bill it will now be armed with the federal resources its needs to adapt to our changing climate. While the change I made to the bill involved just two lines in a large bill, it will have a significantly positive impact on New York and other areas in the country with state and privately managed forests."

The U.S. has 750 million acres of forest land of which two-thirds are held in state and private ownership. More than 62 percent of New York state is forest land, including about 15 million acres of private forest land and approximately 4.5 million acres of public forest lands and working forest conservation easements. One small national forest in the Finger Lakes region of New York is the only national forest in the state. By working to change the way the bill was written, Hinchey helped prevent nearly 500 million acres of non-federal forest land, including 20.5 million acres in New York, from being made ineligible to receive climate adaptation funding through the American Clean Energy and Security Act.

The bill authorizes funding for clean energy projects for 38 years, stretching from 2012 to 2050. Forests will receive greater levels of funding through the years. Hinchey said New York state and private forests stand to receive \$125 million over the life of the bill with \$12 million allocated to the state in the first 10 years and \$45 million over the first 20 years. Nationally, state and private forests will receive \$3.1 billion over the life of the bill, with \$280 million being allocated in the first 10 years and \$1.1 billion in the first 20 years.

New York's forests are essential in providing clean air and water, carbon sequestration, renewable energy and other ecosystem services at little cost to the public. Changes in precipitation, temperature, fire patterns, increased carbon dioxide concentrations, pest outbreaks and other influences associated with climate change have the potential to transform forest ecosystems in the state by altering their composition and shifting their distribution. In some cases, forests don't adapt at the rate at which the climate is changing, leaving open the possibility of losing important forest types, forest biodiversity and wildlife habitat.

Led by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), New York has an array of entities that conduct forest management activities, which can help these forests adapt to climate change and continue to provide wildlife habitat and other essential ecosystems services. Conducting adaptation activities will be particularly important in priority areas identified in New York's recently released State Open Space Conservation Plan and the State-Wide Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy required by the 2008 Farm Bill.

Active forest management can help forests adapt through activities such as: installing measures that facilitate adaptation of wildlife to climate-induced change in forest habitat; including the establishment of migration corridors; conducting activities which minimize or prevent insect, disease or invasive infestations that are anticipated to accelerate by changes in climate; and employing measures across contiguous forest landscapes that collectively achieve diverse age classes, species mix, stand structure and other characteristics that assist in forest adaptation.

In addition to discussing the ways in which the American Clean Energy and Security Act will benefit New York state's forests, Hinchey also detailed how the bill will benefit New York and the nation overall. According to the Center for American Progress, New York could see a net increase of about \$10 billion in investment revenue under the bill, which would translate to 109,000 clean energy jobs. Clean energy investment creates 16.7 jobs for every \$1 million in spending, whereas investments in oil, gas, and other fossil fuels generate just 5.3 jobs per \$1 million in spending. Many of the clean energy jobs that will be created will be in fields in which people work today.

"While I would have preferred a stronger energy bill that made more dramatic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, greater investments in renewable energy research and development, and didn't give away pollution credits for free, this is the best bill the House could produce given the current makeup of the body. We could not afford to do nothing," Hinchey said. "Nevertheless, the clean energy bill we recently approved in the House will create jobs, jobs, and more jobs for New Yorkers. Through the wide array of investments we made in clean energy, we are unleashing the entrepreneurial power of renewable energy businesses and the researchers behind them so that we can put America on top as a clean energy leader. It wasn't long ago that companies like Google and Amazon didn't exist and now they are major economic forces in America. Clean energy businesses will lead America's economy into prosperity and this bill will allow the next Google or Amazon to emerge and become a global force that will create a lot of new jobs and help save the environment in the process."

The American Clean Energy and Security Act requires electric utilities to meet 20 percent of their electricity demand through renewable energy sources and energy efficiency by 2020. The bill invests in new clean energy technologies, including energy efficiency and renewable energy (\$90 billion in new investments by 2025), carbon capture and sequestration (\$60 billion), electric and other advanced technology vehicles (\$20 billion), and basic scientific research and development (\$20 billion). It also mandates new energy-saving standards for buildings and appliances, and promotes energy efficiency in industry.

To combat global warming, the bill reduces carbon emissions from major U.S. sources by 17 percent in 2020 and more than 80 percent by 2050 when compared to 2005 levels. Complementary measures in the legislation, such as investments in preventing tropical deforestation, will achieve significant additional reductions in carbon emissions.

The bill also seeks to protect Americans from energy prices increases in the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy power by providing price cushions. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that the bill will only cost households on average \$80-\$111 per year -- just 22 to 30 cents per day. Hinchey noted that those figures don't take into account how much Americans will benefit from the 1.7 million jobs that will be created nationwide under the bill or the cost of doing nothing and having to deal with the adverse effects of more severe global warming and increased fossil fuel energy prices.

"We cannot live with the status quo as our energy policy," Hinchey said. "The price of gas and other fossil fuels is extremely volatile and has made the U.S. beholden to foreign oil that comes

from places with which we shouldn't be doing business. Without making these changes now, the American people are going to be paying a steep price financially and with their health and the environment overall."

As Congress worked over the past several years toward passing a major renewable energy bill like the one approved on June 26 in the House, Hinchey has been independently working to establish New York as a solar energy leader. In 2007, Hinchey helped organize and create The Solar Energy Consortium (TSEC) in New York. The consortium is an industry-driven, non-profit organization that provides leadership, organization, resources, and support for the establishment of a major solar energy industry cluster in New York.

"New York stands to benefit greatly from the clean energy research and development investments we made in this bill," Hinchey said. "We've done a lot of good work to establish The Solar Energy Consortium in New York and make our area a central hub for solar energy research and development. New York will be on the receiving end of a lot of renewable energy research funding because of the groundwork we've been laying these past several years."

Using his seat on the House Appropriations Committee, Hinchey has now secured more than \$14.2 million in federal funds for TSEC and its partners. The congressman is currently working to obtain significant new levels of federal funding for TSEC and its partners. The consortium has partnered with Prism Solar Technologies and Solar Thin Films, which together plan to bring more than 800 new jobs to upstate New York within 4-5 years. Additionally, TSEC is currently partnering with many smaller companies. In just the last year, TSEC and its partners have collectively created nearly 100 jobs in New York.

The Senate is now working on its own version of a clean energy bill. While several legislative steps remain, securing language for state and private forests in the House bill is considered critical to ensuring the provision becomes law.

Hinchey was joined for the announcement of the funds at the Bluestone Wild Forest by New York State Forester Director Robert Davies, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Division of Lands & Forests Regional Director Jeff Wiegert and Regional Director Willie Janeway.

